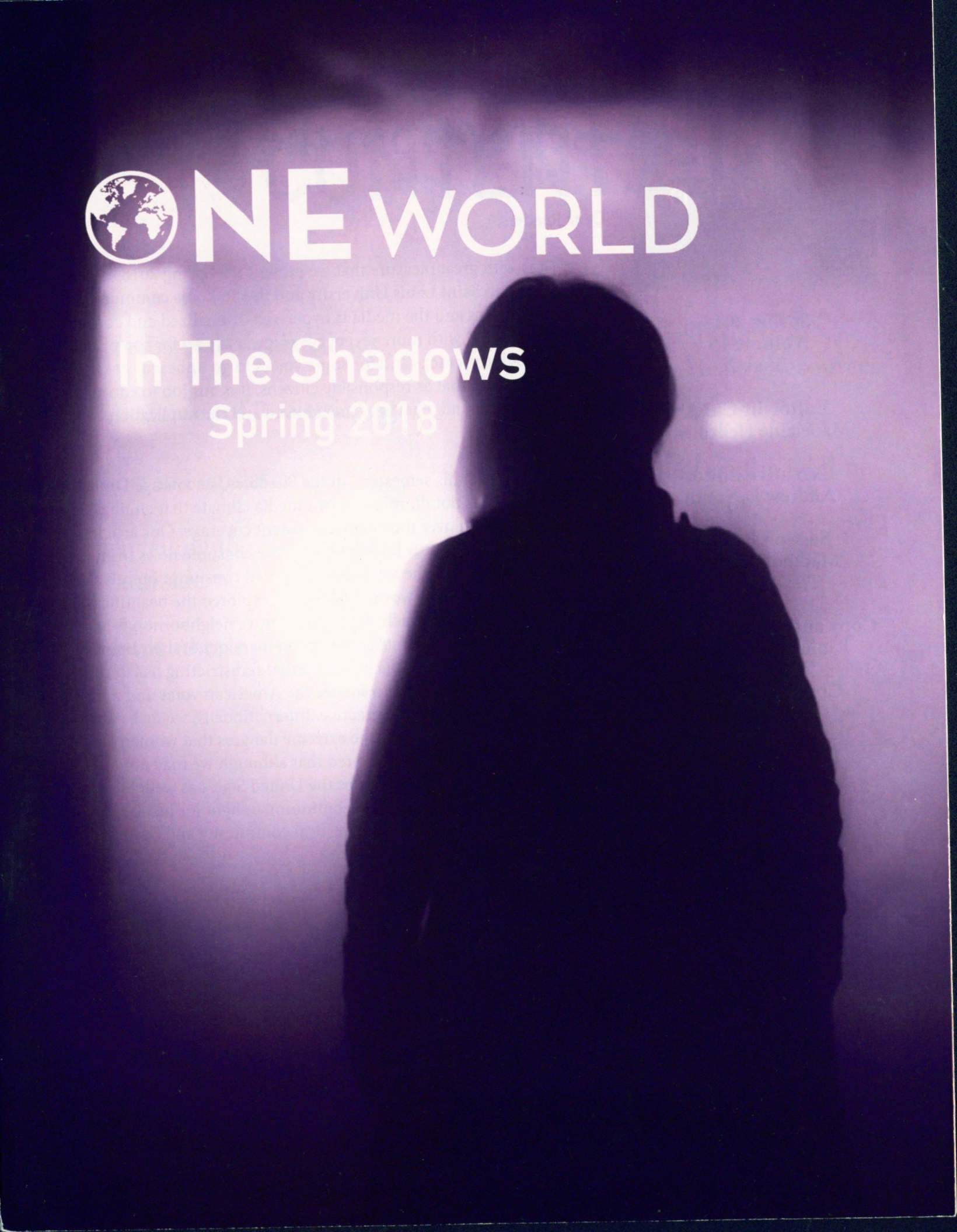


A person's silhouette is shown from the back, standing in a bright, vertical beam of light that cuts through a dark, hazy environment. The light source is behind the person, creating a strong backlight effect. The overall mood is mysterious and contemplative.

ONE WORLD

In The Shadows
Spring 2018



Spring 2018
Volume 13
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Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

It is with great pleasure that we present the Spring 2018 edition of OneWorld to Saint Louis University and the St. Louis community. In a time when news and the media is hyper-sensationalized and content is rapidly replaced with more recent coverage, it is easy for some stories to fall through the cracks and for some voices to go unheard. At OneWorld, we believe that as responsible citizens, it is our job to educate ourselves on who and what is overshadowed and the implications this has on society.

Our theme this semester, "In the Shadows," encouraged our staff to examine what is not illuminated in a media climate that emphasizes instant gratification over thorough, consistent coverage. Our articles intend to highlight what is forgotten when we consume news from just one source and explore the ways that one-sided consumption can skew our understanding of the world. Locally, we explored the beautification movement in St. Louis, which strives to improve neighborhoods and support current residents, rather than push them out of their homes. Nationally, we investigated the influence that redistricting has in the political realm and its ability to silence the American voter and highlighted the significance of the practice. Internationally, we investigated the horrors of femicide and the extreme dangers that women face around the world; we also discovered that although we may not be acutely aware of it, femicide plagues the United States as well. Finally, we reflected on the importance of continuing to fight for justice and to fight for all voices to be heard in our local community and beyond.

OneWorld is not simply a magazine but a call to action. We hope that these stories transform you as much as they did us. We hope that they inspire you to question, research and get involved so that we can better recognize the worth in all of our neighbors, despite the injustices in society.

"We yearn to remove the barriers of ignorance and injustice, because the most basic and unchanging truth that unites us is the infinite value of the human person."

liveOneWorld,
The Editorial Board

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The Digital Media Divide



Nish Gorczya
Senior
Communication

During the 2016 election, Facebook users all over the United States noticed a difference in the way their family and friends behaved online. Split between hard-line conservatives and liberals, the social media platform transformed into a war zone full of widely-shared fake news, passionately opinionated rants in comment sections and name-calling that rivaled that of professional sports leagues. The divisions seen in the nation were reflected by the polarization in both social media and traditional news sources.

In a sense, however, the current media climate reflects the roots of journalism in the nineteenth century. “The newspapers were actually run by political parties, or at least supported by them,” Dr. Matt Carlson, Associate Professor in the Communication Department, said. “This was true of the 1800s; that news was not objective, but clearly written from a perspective. And as a result, the population was very polarized in the 1800s, and that’s just the way politics was.”

In fact, one could argue that today’s society is less polarized than that time.

“It was even worse than today with people slinging mud at each other and making lots of false accusations and saying whatever they want,” Carlson said. “What happened was, news changed and became more objective in the 20th century and we had fewer outlets, so newspapers, television, radio all just gave straight facts. So polarization died down. And then, we started having new sources: talk radio, cable news, magazines; so we saw polarization starting to creep in again because there were places to get news that you agreed with.”

Social Media

Today, social media platforms have risen as news aggregators that can bring worldwide attention to events with the click of a button. The amount of content shared on each platform far exceeds what each person can consume, so these sites resort to showing their users what they’d like

to see to keep them engaged, and therefore consuming more ads.

Enter algorithms: while generally used in many different fields, algorithms that govern what any given user may see in their feed are particularly aimed at collecting data and using that to the advantage of the platform. After all, they are businesses and businesses exist to make money.



“A lot of blame goes toward the algorithms, and how they shape what people see,” Carlson said. “And the idea is that Facebook will give you more of what you click on, so if you like partisan news and One Direction, they’ll give you that.”

The algorithms vary between platforms and change often, but they ensure that the users keep coming back in order to make each platform more money off of advertising engagement.

It’s also important to note that social media is not the only way most people get their news—in fact, a Reuters study on digital media from 2017 found that only about 2 percent of all people in the United States consume news only through social media. A vast majority still watch television news and visit news sources’ websites as well.

While many blame social media and the spread of fake news for the deep-seeded polarization in the nation, a recent study shows that it actually has little effect. Researchers at Brown and Stanford found that those over 75 have become profoundly more polarized between 1996 and 2012 than any younger age group; so those who tend to lean furthest to either side are those least likely to be engaged in social media. In addition, those aged 18 to 39 saw the smallest increase in polarization among the researchers’ findings. Perhaps this is because social media isn’t intended to be used as a news source, but the reasons are overall inconclusive.

The News

News sources, on the other hand, are still politicized today. True objectivity is nearly impossible for human beings, as everyone carries an individual background, viewpoint and opinion on a variety of subjects. However, some news sources take this to the extreme by passing off opinions as facts; for the average media consumer, the line isn’t always clear.

“There’s all these different kinds of sources that can run the gamut from being completely and utterly fabricated to being partially true to being a weird conspiracy theory to being just an opinion,” Carlson said. “It all gets mixed together with social media. People can click on things without knowing where they’re from.”

Every news outlet is guilty of perpetuating bias on some level in order to make money from advertising. But some, like Fox News and MSNBC, do this in a more overt way. By eschewing traditional objectivity, they present a one-sided view of current events. According to Diana C. Mutz, professor of Political Science and Communication

at the University of Pennsylvania, watching polarized news gives the audience a single, biased view of issues, which in turn increases the likelihood of political polarization.

Interestingly, conservatives and liberals in the United States have different news consumption habits. The Pew Research Center says that conservatives tend to follow a single source for their news, whereas liberals are more likely to rely on a variety of news outlets. Additionally, those who identify somewhere in the middle of the political spectrum report that political discussion is not an important part of their lives, and that they are more likely to use Google News or Yahoo News as their information source on politics. These news aggregators are more likely to show both liberal and conservative news sources to their users.

The differences are also seen in the way the two sides feel in regards to their sources: conservatives tend to distrust about 66 percent of news sources, whereas liberals trust 78 percent of news sources. When it comes to Fox News, as many as 88 percent of conservatives say they trust it as a news source.

Echo Chambers

If all your friends believe the same things that you do and you never see any dissenting opinions, then you exist in an environment where you only encounter agreement with your views. This creates “echoes” of support for your own ideas, which you are more likely to enjoy consuming, thereby spending more time on social media. The idea of echo chambers is not a new one, but social media algorithms have become more pervasive and have reinforced this phenomenon.

“With the Internet, anyone can find anything they agree with at any time and completely avoid any information that runs counter to what they think,” Carlson said.

The Pew Research Center study also showed some interesting trends in political leanings within echo chambers: while about two-thirds of conservatives have close friends who share their political views, liberals are more likely to block someone on social media—or end a friendship completely—because of their political views. In fact, about 44 percent claim to have done so. By comparison, 31 percent of conservatives and 26 percent of all Facebook users have done the same.

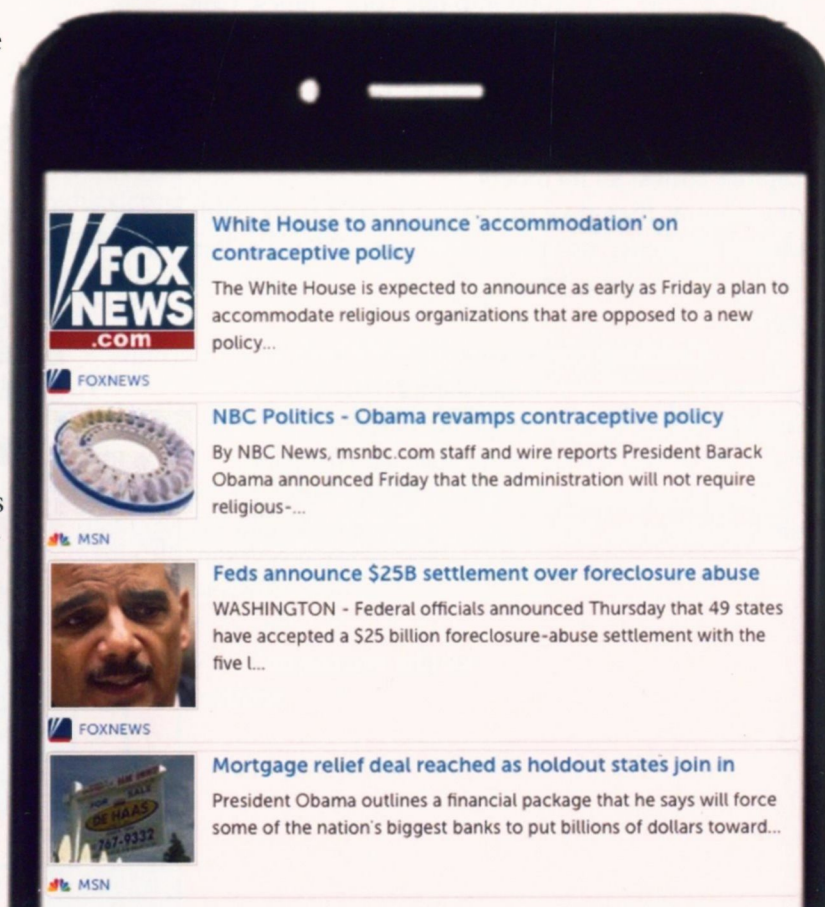
A different study, also by the Pew Research Center, focuses on how people are unlikely to

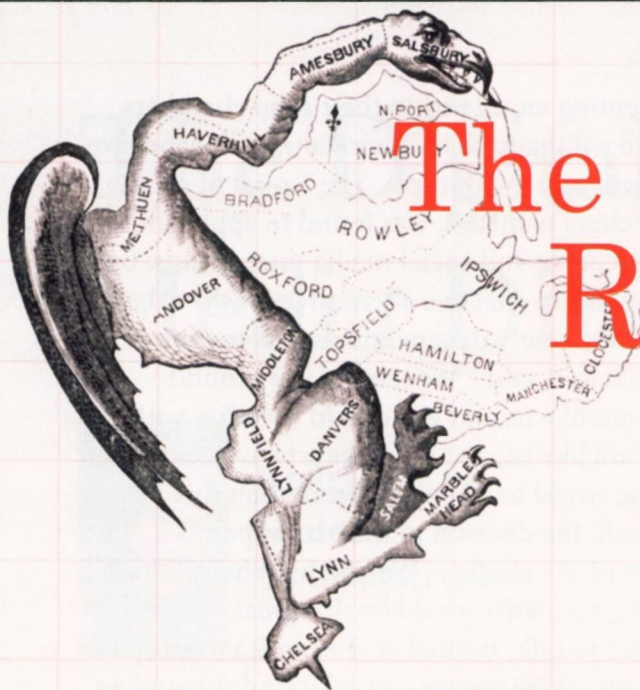
express dissenting views within their echo chambers and are more willing to share their views if they believe that others will agree with them. The “spiral of silence,” as the researchers named it, was found to apply both to in-person discourse and social media interactions; one does not provide an effective alternative for the other.

“I think society in general has become more polarized,” Carlson said. “We tend to live around people who are like us and we tend to socialize with people who are like us, so I don’t see why we’d expect for the online world to be any different than this.”

Overall, the division in the nation paints a bleak picture of the media. “We had high hopes originally that digital media would be this great place to come together to talk. Instead, it’s become a toxic space in a lot of ways where people can surround themselves with others and stay in their echo chambers and not have to confront opinions that go against theirs.”

There is no easy fix for this problem. Media is just that: a way to convey messages. Throughout its history, it has always been used for reasons good and bad, moral and corrupt. Those that control it should be obligated to use it responsibly, but those that consume it should be equally responsible for mindful reading and watching. In the end, the issue of polarization lies with the consumer and his or her choices, not with the media itself.





The Power of Redistricting



Andrew Smith
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Sociology

Every ten years, congressional election districts need to be redrawn to reflect population change and maintain districts with the same population. When people use redistricting power to favor certain groups, the process is known as gerrymandering. Redistricting can be used to favor racial groups, political parties or other special interests. Gerrymandering can harm the democratic process, eliminate meaningful competition and disenfranchise minority voters. It is more widespread than people think.

In most cases, gerrymandering takes one of two forms: packing or cracking. Packing occurs when district lines concentrate a group into one voting block. Consider Group A, a group of like-minded people who live predominantly in one neighborhood. If district lines capture almost all members of Group A, then they will certainly elect their candidate of choice. However, no other politician will have to listen to Group A's concerns because Group A is not in their constituency.

Cracking occurs when district lines dilute a group's power by spreading the members across many districts. Imagine Group B, whose members represent a slight majority in one part of town in one district. Historically, Group B chooses a candidate who fights a competitive election and usually wins. When new congressional maps take

effect, Group B's neighborhood is split into two districts that include other neighborhoods with other groups. Overnight, individuals in Group B become minorities in their new districts and they are less likely to elect their candidate of choice.

Gerrymandering has a long history in the United States. The process was first documented in 1812 when Massachusetts Governor Elbridge Gerry was accused of redrawing district lines to benefit his party. Gerrymandering has continued since, and is the subject of one current United States Supreme Court Case and one upcoming case. Historically, people have used this process to accomplish

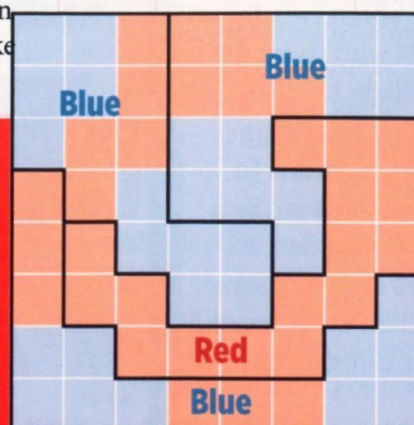
"Hating gerrymandering is easy. Fixing it is harder."

many ends, including partisan advantage or disenfranchisement of racial minorities. Both the Republican and Democratic parties have been accused of

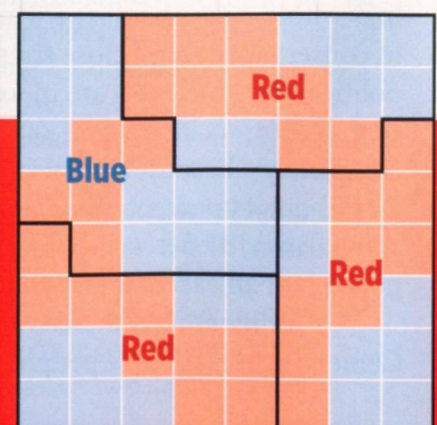
using political power to shape district maps.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) prohibited using redistricting to disenfranchise racial minorities, but created further complications. Under the Voting Rights Act and subsequent court decisions, states must create districts that have a majority of racial minority voters if it is possible.

Packing



Cracking



Proponents of this law argue that these “majority minority districts” empower racial minorities and allow otherwise underrepresented voters the ability to elect their candidate of choice. Critics of this law argue that this ruling harms competition by creating elections that are “overly” safe for minority candidates. Further, racial minorities could be packed into districts and their overall political efficacy could be diminished.

The 2014 U.S. Supreme Court case *Alabama Legislative Black Caucus v. Alabama* demonstrated this quandary. Plaintiffs in the case argued that black voters were being packed together in such a way that harmed their overall political influence. Alabama argued that legislators were complying with the Voting Rights Act by creating the majority-minority district, noting that the maps were pre-approved by the Justice Department. The Court sided with Alabama.

This is even more problematic when considering that minority candidates currently lean to Democratic party. Despite being ideologically diverse, African American voters overwhelmingly vote for Democratic candidates. In 2016, *The Washington Post* reported that the black electorate is nearly evenly split between people who identify as conservative or liberal. Despite this, Democratic presidential candidates have won over 80 percent of the African American vote in every presidential election since 1960. This partisan lean blurs the line between majority minority districts mandated by the VRA and districts that pack Democratic voters.

Gerrymandering can be purely politically motivated as well. The current U.S. Supreme Court case *Gill v. Waterman* is examining the results of Wisconsin’s redistricting in 2011. Republicans controlled the State legislature at the time, and thus had control over the redistricting process. Democrats argue that the maps gave Republicans an undue advantage. The Court is expected to rule in June 2018.

These manipulations of power necessitate reflection on what the democratic process should ensure. Fundamentally, elected officials should represent their constituents. Voters, in turn, need to have justifiable faith in the democratic process. Gerrymandering undermines both meaningful representation and trust. Gerrymandered districts fail to represent communities that share common history or

proximity, and voting power becomes a commodity that is sold to whoever has the capacity to buy it. When voters realize that the power of their vote has been stolen, they lose trust in the democratic process.

“Hating gerrymandering is easy. Fixing it is harder,” David Wasserman of FiveThirtyEight said. Many states have been experimenting with different changes that could decrease the influence of politicians and interest groups. Currently, California may have the best solution.

Before 2010, California’s elected officials of both parties enjoyed an overwhelming incumbency advantage, which was entrenched by district lines. Growing citizen outrage eventually led to the creation of the independent California Citizens Redistricting Commission. This Commission, which first redrew maps prior to the 2012 elections, is comprised of three Democrats, three Republicans and two politically unaffiliated citizens. The Commission is charged with creating districts that keep existing communities whole. The resulting maps significantly reduced the incumbency advantage in subsequent elections. The Commission was recognized in 2017 by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University for its innovative approach to combating gerrymandering.

The upcoming Supreme Court decisions may fundamentally change the way that voters are organized, or rather, scattered into districts. Regardless of the Court’s ruling, citizens should be more informed about the nuance of redistricting. In states where the maps are still drawn behind closed doors, citizens should demand a more transparent redistricting. Even if maps are drawn by politicians and bureaucrats, transparency would empower citizens to hold their representatives accountable. In turn, the electorate would have more confidence that their votes matter.

Fixing gerrymandering requires citizens to reflect on the importance of fair democracy, educate themselves about how redistricting affects their vote and call upon elected officials to enact meaningful change. Once this occurs, this hidden process will no longer degrade our elections.

Lost in Legislation



Taylor Schleisman
Junior
American Studies
& Psychology

Access to reproductive healthcare for women is under constant attack. This battle occurs on all fronts, from passing legislation that puts unnecessary obstacles in the way of safe and legal abortions, to protesters blocking the entry into health care centers in an attempt to shame or misdirect patrons.

No doctor's office is more divisive than Planned Parenthood, but why? According to the Planned Parenthood 2016 annual fact sheet, 47 percent of the services provided were for STI treatment and testing, followed by 28 percent for contraception services, 14 percent for other women's health services and 7 percent for cancer screenings and prevention. Only 3 percent of the total services provided by Planned Parenthood were abortion-related. Yet, that 3 percent of safe and legal services attracts retaliation from conservative-minded lawmakers and detracts from all of the valuable healthcare and advocacy work that Planned Parenthood does.

Legislators take aim at Planned Parenthood and other abortion care providers via Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers bills, or TRAP bills. Essentially, these are designed to sound like reasonable attempts to protect patients; in reality, they are veiled attempts to prevent women from accessing

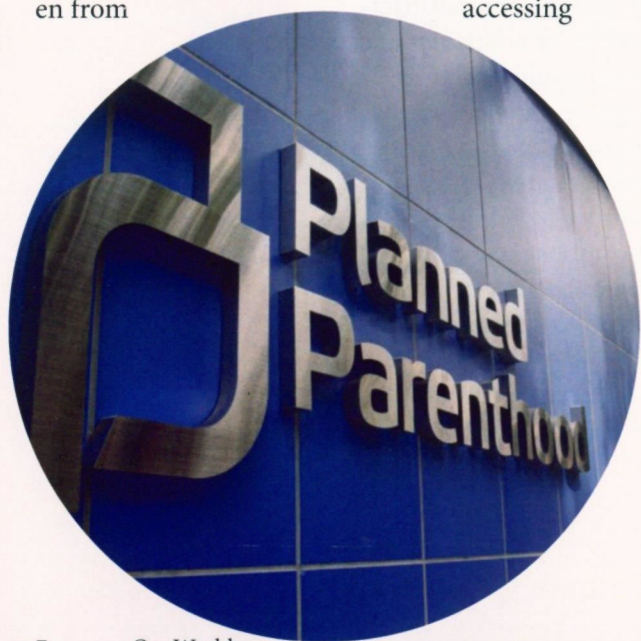
safe and legal abortions and other reproductive health services. As the 2016 documentary "Trapped" points out, the function of these bills are not to regulate care, but to regulate abortion care providers out of business by setting impossibly high standards. These requirements may include expensive and unnecessary medical equipment, non-relevant drugs that must be constantly replaced or unrealistic prerequisites for physicians.

Creating more trivial restrictions on a woman's access to health services and adding more tedious requirements for health care centers violates the rights outlined in the Supreme Court case *Roe v. Wade*. This case declared that states may not intervene within the doctor-patient decision to have an abortion. Yet, in the 45 years since the original ruling, there have been methodical state-by-state efforts to restrict this right by religious organizations, corporations and other special interest lobby groups.

Since 2010, 250 laws have passed at the state level that restrict health care clinics and doctors who provide abortion services. In 2017 alone, six states moved to ban abortion completely and 28 states moved to ban abortions under certain circumstances. Again, this violates the precedent set by *Roe v. Wade* because while states may regulate abortion, they cannot outlaw the procedure completely, and especially not during the first trimester.

In Missouri and Iowa, policies prohibit joint federal-state funded programs. These states favor state-funded programs where family planning centers that provide abortion services would be ineligible to receive funding, according to the Guttmacher Institute. They exclude abortion providers from their Medicaid Family Planning Expansions, despite the fact that excluding qualified care providers on the basis of the services offered is not technically allowed. Texas was the trailblazer of this sneaky strategy back in 2013, and is actually now in the process of attempting to restore its funding for reproductive health care providers. Go figure.

In Missouri, a TRAP bill—Senate Bill 5—was passed in July of 2017. Missouri Senate Bill 5 hinders a woman's right to choose through adding unnecessary data collection and reporting requirements, which prevent the successful operation of health care centers that offer one of the most regulated procedures in the state. It may look as if this bill is reasonable and meant to protect patients, but in reality it puts them at risk because it prevents cities from regulating so called "Pregnancy Resource Centers" that are not required by law to provide factually or medically accu-



rate information. It also prevents cities from enacting laws to protect patients and providers from potentially hostile protesters. In reality, this legislation puts Missouri residents at risk for a lag in service provision, receiving misinformation and physical harm.

Yet another TRAP bill is in the legislative process. Missouri Senate Bill 714 is startlingly similar to a recent bill that was passed in the Iowa legislature early this year, which prevents an abortion without a fetal heartbeat test within 96 hours of the procedure. If a heartbeat was detected, the abortion could not be performed unless it was a medical emergency.

Besides the oppressive ideological implications of such a bill, logistically it leaves women with limited access to safe and legal abortion services. Currently in Missouri, women are allowed to get an abortion six days to 21 weeks after their last menstrual cycle. The catch here is that a fetal heartbeat may be detected at seven weeks, a third of the original time allotted. The other catch is that the limitations placed on care providers from TRAP bills like Senate Bill 5, mean that: 1) There are few providers that can actually perform the procedure; 2) There are few doctors willing or legally able to perform the procedure; and 3) The requirements and time limits give women remarkably less room to make their constitutionally-protected decision.

“Since 2010, **250 laws** have passed at the state level that restrict health care clinics and doctors who provide abortion services.”

Recently, patients from Midwestern states with burdensome health care restrictions to have traveled to Illinois, where services are more readily available. According to the Chicago Tribune, 4,500 women crossed into Illinois to terminate a pregnancy in 2016. This is because instead of focusing on major gaps in Missouri’s public health—the maternal mortality rate or the fact that Saint Louis has been the STI capital of the country for the better part of a decade—the legislature has passed bills that make it harder for Missouri residents to receive reproductive health care within state boundaries.

The Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region and Southwest Missouri’s location in the Central West End is one of only

Breakdown of Affiliate Medical Services Provided

47%

STI Testing & Treatment

28%

Contraception

14%

Other Women’s Health Services

7%

Cancer Screenings & Prevention

3%

Abortion Services

1%

Other Services



three places to get an abortion in Missouri. There are over three million women who reside in this state. Nikia Paulette, the head grassroots organizer at this Planned Parenthood, stated that the impact of TRAP bills are threefold: “We have had to decrease the number of patients that we are able to serve in the Reproductive Health Services Center, patients have to travel across the river to Illinois for services and there are lots of unnecessary changes and regulations added for our administration which take time and money to implement.”

TRAP bills fail to address circumstances that lead to unplanned pregnancies or abortion. The legislation does not address the startlingly poor quality of sexual education or lack of access to contraceptives. Instead of supporting women who do choose to have children, legislators expect new mothers to be able to be full time parents and financial providers. Women who chose to terminate their pregnancy are shamed by the people elected to protect their welfare.

And that is key: these legislators are elected officials, which means they should care about the well-being of their constituents over the interests of lobbyists.

Paulette urges people to take initiative to advocate for access to healthcare services: “Call, write, tweet legislators at the state level and ask them to vote no on TRAP bills that have been introduced, and ask them to focus on more proactive pieces of legislation.”

It is time to take back reproductive healthcare from people who cannot and will not put the health and wellbeing of constituents over special interests. It is time for legislatures to recognize that women are the masters of their own bodies and they have a legal right to choose.

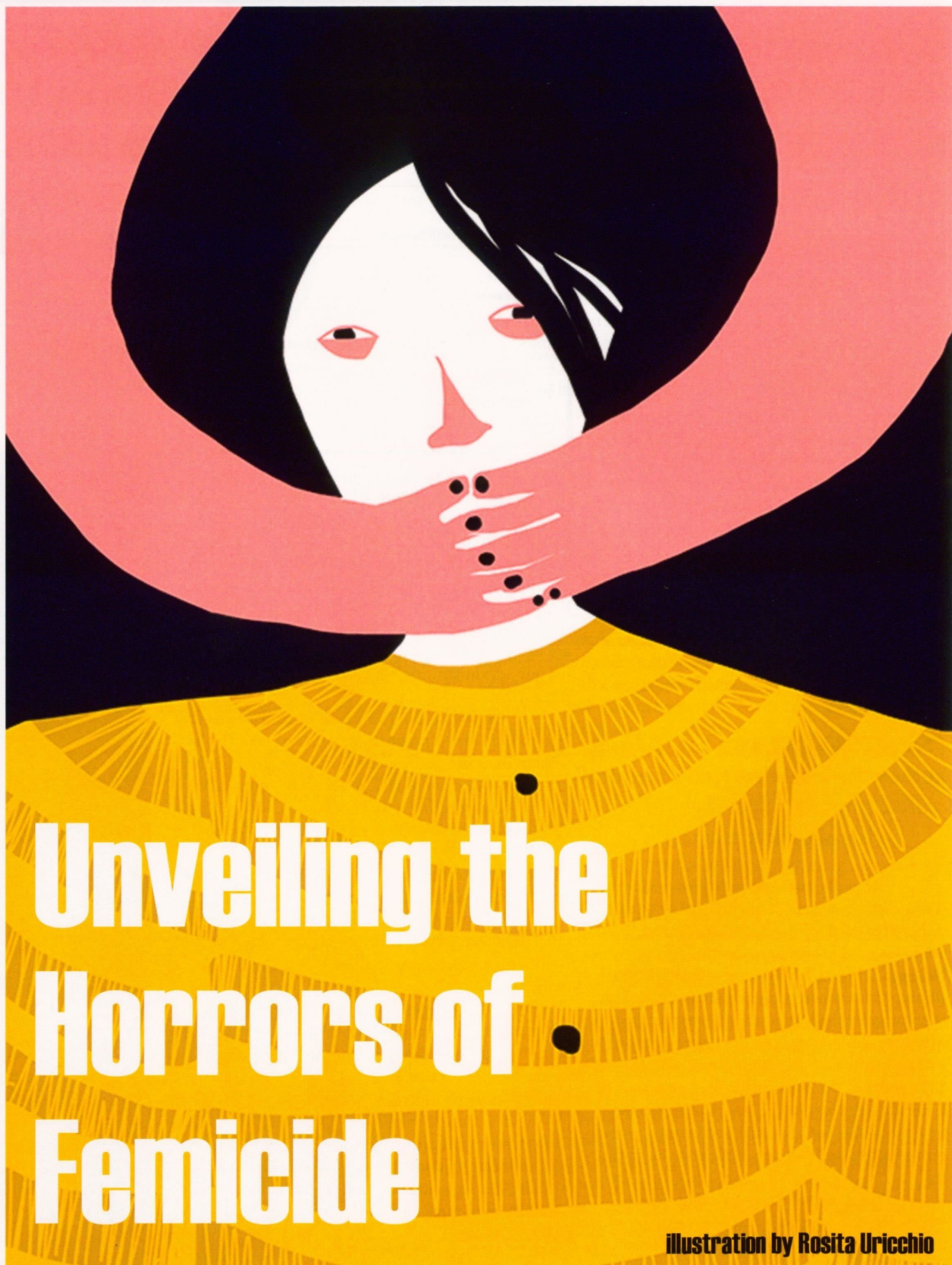


illustration by Rosita Uricchio



Fiona Clair Junior Communication & International Studies

Why is it easier to fathom that seven women are killed every day in Mexico than the fact that 150 women were killed in Britain in 2014? Why is it that 600 million women are forced to live in fear because their countries do not have laws against domestic violence? Why is it that Americans readily see dowry-murder as a cultural practice, but miss the connection between gun ownership and domestic violence-related murder in their own country?

Women around the world are living in fear. They are staying in abusive relationships, they are hiding from and concealing their sexuality, they are being forced into marriages before the age of 15 and they are suffering in silence. This violence, this crime, can be summed up by the notion of “femicide.” The term refers to the killing of women because they are women; but even more than that, it refers to the systemic structure of society that allows for a patriarchal rule to reign. These murders are not being recorded and they are not being stopped. They persist because the global society tolerates them, and even—arguably—produces them.

As outlined by the World Health Organization in 2012, there are four main types of femicide: intimate, ‘honor’-related, dowry-related and non-intimate. Intimate femicide occurs when a man murders a woman he had an intimate relationship with. ‘Honor’-related femicide occurs when a woman is killed by a family member to protect the family’s reputation. Dowry-related femicide occurs when a woman is killed over conflicts with her dowry for marriage. Finally, non-intimate femicide refers to the random killing of women—sometimes involving sexual aggression—from someone the woman does not know. It sounds unbelievable, like something that could not possibly still be happening in today’s world. And yet, according to research conducted by women’s rights group La Casa del Encuentro, more than 1,800 women in Argentina have been killed since 2008.

Femicide is not a widely used word: in fact, it is intentionally avoided. Karen Ingala Smith, creator of the blog “Counting Dead Women,” highlighted this injustice in an interview with Time Magazine. Domestic violence gets attention. It is a phrase found all over U.S. news, but there are problems with the implications of that terminology. It is not men killing women that gets discussed; instead, women are killed by domestic violence. It displaces the blame and draws the attention away from the fact that men are killing women.

There is not a discussion on femicide within the United States, but it is not because women are not murdered here. Not only are women subjected to violence on behalf of men, but the systemic injustices they face are kept silent. Amanda Izzo—an Assistant Professor in the Women’s and Gender Studies department at Saint Louis University—sheds light on this oppression.

“There is no story in the United States,” she said.

Her statement may be confusing. Of course, there is a story of femicide in the United States where women are killed daily by their partners and family members. But no one is labeling

it. If no one recognizes these murders as instances of femicide, the power to cultivate social change dies with the victims, and the social forces behind femicide persist in the shadows.

As outlined by Uma Narayan in her paper “Cross-Cultural Connections, Border-Crossings, and ‘Death By Culture,’” Americans look at tragedies like dowry-murders in India and see them as a specific social issue, as “death by culture” even. However, in the U.S. there exists a similar problem with domestic-violence murder; the difference is one injustice is named, while the other is not.

Although the U.S. passed the Violence Against Women Act in 1994, nearly 20 years after the term femicide was coined, it does not mention the word femicide or what it represents. There is no unified collection system for gender-specific deaths in this country (and countless others), and keeping such a record is not a simple task by any means. In order to record the deaths of these women and bring the perpetrators to justice, we must first master a certain level of cultural self-examination.

“If we start thinking of this as a particular category of violence, it might help us see the roots of it,” Izzo said. “You can’t find a one-size-fits-all solution for it.”

The United Nations Population Fund helps to draw out this idea that femicide does not have one simple solution. The main reason for this is that gender-based violence, or GBV, does not have a single contributing factor. In fact, it is necessary to understand the factors at play in different cultural contexts to even begin addressing GBV on a global scale. But it needs to be addressed: domestic violence and rape kill more women between the ages of 15 and 44 than cancer, car accidents, war or malaria. Femicide and GBV have to be taken seriously, and not just by the government or the criminal justice system. Smith put it best in an interview with The Guardian.

“If we had a perfect police force, men would still kill women...It’s deeper, right down in the way we raise our children, the girls dressed in pink and called princesses. Told by their parents that the boy hit them in the playground just because he secretly likes them,” Smith said.

The problem is not that women are not strong and independent; the problem is that girls are socialized into contexts and situations where their safety is threatened from an alarmingly young age, while their male peers are taught that masculinity trumps kindness. They taunt the girl they like at school because they wholeheartedly believe it is endearing, not suppressing.

Despite the darkness surrounding this global issue, there is a small light. There is a fire ignited and fed by movements like the anti-femicide campaign, #NiUnaMenos, in Argentina and the #MeToo movement against sexual violence in the United States. Progress is made because people are talking. These campaigns bring hope and awareness to long-neglected transgressions and press adults to have difficult conversations with their children.

Forceful, patriarchy-shattering conversations have the power to reverse the trends of toxic masculinity and subverted femininity that have dominated history. People like Karen Ingala Smith, who take it upon themselves to record and publicize femicide, are making a difference. They are educating a naive world with the hope that one day the lessons will stick. One day, society will change. One day, women will not have to live in fear.



Tremayne Watterson

Junior

Biostatistics &
Public Health

Six years after the murder of 24-year-old St. Louis resident Anthony Lamar Smith, the police officer that shot him five times was acquitted of his murder. Sadly, this was no surprise for many, as he was yet another unarmed black man shot down by the police. Yet, for some reason, this case stung a little bit more than the others. It could have been because the case was reopened after six years. I mean, why would they reopen this wound if they didn't have a fool-proof case, right? Or maybe it was because we had seen the viral video of the accused Jason Stockley saying, "We're killing this mother*****," just moments before he put five bullets into Smith's unarmed body. Or, possibly, it was because the judge in the case was a SLU Law graduate, and the Jesuit mission is all about a faith that does justice. Regardless, when I saw the verdict, I was angry, confused and broken. I had so many thoughts and emotions running through me that I didn't know what to do with them. I tried to take my mind off it; I tried to play FIFA, but that did not distract me from those emotions. When a few friends of mine mentioned that they were going downtown to participate in protests against the verdict and what it implied for people of color, I knew I had to join them.

When we arrived, I knew in my gut that I was in the right place. We marched and we chanted all throughout St. Louis.

We only stopped once in the Central West End for six minutes of silence to recognize the six years that Smith's trial went unheard by our justice system. Those hours that I marched alongside fellow St. Louisans were some of the best of my life. All walks of life, from parents with their young children to fellow Billikens, were led by community members. Chants of "Black Lives Matter," and, "This is what Democracy looks like," still echo in my ears. Hearing that people like me mattered was cathartic, and it began to wash some of the pain and hurt away. Where there was anger, came passion; where there was confusion, came a clear path; and where there was brokenness, came a community.

I had hoped that these feelings and the momentum of the protests would follow me back to SLU. I hoped that we would begin to have conversations about the systematic biases that led to this verdict and that continue to disenfranchise people of color, both in this city any and on this campus. Those conversations never happened. When we returned to campus, I heard comments like, "Why did they throw water bottles at police?" or "Why did they break that person's window?"

Immediately, I felt ostracized once again. At the protests, I felt a genuine kinship among the marchers: both with those that I recognized as friends or acquaintances, and those that were complete strangers. Back on campus, fellow Billikens were calling us looters and thugs. This showed a side of SLU that I refused to believe was the truth. Instead of looking at the whole picture or asking what led the protesters to react this way, students remained insulated in their rooms or on campus and took what they saw on the news as pure fact.

On Sunday, the marches came to campus. There was no ignoring us now.

When the protests reached Chaifetz, I grabbed my Black Lives Matter shirt and ran up Lindell. Along the way I caught up with friends and the euphoria of Friday's march came rushing back to me. I met up with the crowd when they were by the BSC and I felt at home. We marched around the intersection and chanted with all our might. Then, I was told to go to the intersection of Grand and West Pine with my student ID; we were going through campus. This way, students would see what we were fighting for. With my ID in hand, I ran to the gates where fellow Billikens and I were confronted by bikes and weapons.

DPS was told by President Pestello that our open campus was no longer open to those that were exercising their right to non-violent assembly. We were shook. The protesters were not part of some anarchist organization or some group of people trying to destroy property. We were Americans, walking for our right to live.

OccupySLU has been framed as a badge of honor. When we mention it now, it is viewed as an iconic moment in SLU's history, a turning point where our campus made a conscious decision to be a community that worked for justice at SLU and the greater St. Louis community. SLU has won several awards for how they handled the situation. But here we were, having the same conversation about the murder of yet another black man, not even ten miles from campus. And when given the option, we chose not to act with compassion, or in service to our fellow kin, but instead with fear. The SLU Twitter and email service told students that there was an "all-campus community shelter" in place. That same terminology is used in the case of a school shooting.

We stood at the gates for what felt like hours, pleading with the officers that these people with us were our friends, our family, that we were just trying to get on our campus. I, with fellow members of SGA, hoped that maybe we had the clout to sway DPS. We were sadly mistaken.

Soon after, community members realized that they would not be let on our campus and decided to move on. We pleaded with them to give us a few more minutes, but this wasn't on their route, and they had a schedule to keep. Saddened, I tried to walk around to some other entrances to campus, hoping that maybe somewhere there wouldn't be any officers blocking our path. Each entrance had at least two officers. After expressing my displeasure to the officers blocking my way onto the campus where I live, and have lived for the past three years, they called for backup. I guess these armed 6-foot men felt threatened by the 5-foot-4 unarmed black man before them. At another entrance, an officer refused to let me on campus because the sticker on my ID was "expired," and I was only allowed to pass when a white friend of mine vouched for me.

I felt frustrated and sad that SLU let me down, but some

powerful students on this campus refused to allow that to represent us and organized a response.

Since non-students were not allowed on campus, they called on all students and faculty willing to meet at the Clock Tower to stand with arms locked in solidarity with the protestors and with each other. We stood and listened as fellow students spoke about why we were doing this and why it was important to use our right to protest to express our disappointment in the decision to lock out our Saint Louis community. The protests on the campus were chaotic and harmonious. We walked around campus yelling and screaming, making sure that our voices were heard.

After congregating at the Clock Tower, we headed to the BSC. We marched all throughout the building and eventually sat as a mass on the lawn, waiting patiently for Dr. Pestello to hear our frustrations. While I cannot express how disappointed I was in him and his decision to put a "shelter in place" warning out, I can admit that I did respect him for coming and facing his dissatisfied and angry students. This was the SLU that I had believed in: a campus that believed in fighting for equity and justice. I understand that not every student on the campus joined in with us, but that's okay. Advocacy is one of those funky things where

there are a million ways that one can advocate; it just depends on the person.

The day after the protests ended, we admittedly were not sure what to do next. The beauty of blackness is that what unites us is our uniqueness, and while that is amazing, at times it can be difficult to find a unified vision. The adrenaline that came from the protests was beginning to drain, and we all began to drift back into our day-to-day routines. When I was asked to write this piece, I wasn't sure what to

do. Through this reflection, however, I was reminded of one key fact: the importance of diligence.

This year, the last class that was actually on SLU's campus during the events of OccupySLU will graduate. With their departure, the memories of that week and the urgency of the Clock Tower Accords will fade away, but only if we allow it. We must challenge ourselves to remember the lessons we learned from OccupySLU and the protests that happened the Sunday after the Stockley verdict. Without this diligence, the lessons we learned will vanish into the backgrounds of our busy student lives. The Clock Tower Accords must not be allowed to be forgotten, and the only way we can assure this is through a diligent commitment to hold not only the administration accountable, but also our fellow students. The goals of the accords are large and will not be accomplished by one or two people, but instead through a movement of students, faculty and the Saint Louis community. Barack Obama once said, quoting Dr. King in part, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice. But, it doesn't bend on its own." If we want to change this campus, then we have to keep fighting. Complacency is not an option.



A Depoliticized Guide to Reproductive Health Resources In St. Louis City

by Healthy is Hot Core Team



Mission: To provide education on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and comprehensive support services to those affected by the disease
Services: Free HIV/STD testing, STI treatment, case management and pet companions
Ideology: Not applicable
Contacts: 314-645-6451
Address: 1027 S. Vandeventer #700 St. Louis, MO 63110

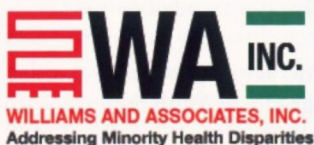
Mission: To provide, protect and support reproductive and sexual health, services, access and rights.

Services: Abortion services and options counseling, GYN exams, birth control, breast, testicular, and cervical cancer screenings, colposcopy, emergency contraception, Essure (female sterilization), HIV testing and counseling, HPV vaccine, HPV, pregnancy and STI testing, vasectomy and more.

Ideology: Pro-choice

Contacts: (314) 865-1850 for Forest Park and (314) 531-7526 for S Grand

Address: 4251 Forest Park Ave or 3401 S Grand Blvd



Mission: To provide preventative health education, disease prevention, health promotion and care services that address the health disparities of minorities in the Saint Louis bi-state region, with particular regard to African Americans.

Services: Medical case management, early intervention and HIV risk reduction services

Ideology: Not applicable

Contacts: 314-385-1935

Address: 3737 North Kingshighway Blvd., Suite 204-206, St. Louis, MO 63115

Mission: To serve youth ages 13-24 and responding to their particular needs through a comprehensive model of health and social services.

Services: HIV and STD testing, case management, mental health counseling, substance use counseling, pregnancy testing, Plan B, STD treatment, case management including employment, housing, education or job training, health insurance applications and other resources. LGBT friendly services include medical providers, legal and social supports.

Ideology: Not applicable

Contacts: 314-535-0413

Address: 4169 Laclede, St. Louis, MO



Mission: a Christ-centered organization that empowers people to make life-affirming and healthy decisions about sex, pregnancy and relationships

Services: Pregnancy testing, low cost STD testing referrals, pregnancy check-ups

Ideology: Pro-life

Contacts: 314-783-0478

Address: 4331 Lindell Blvd, Saint Louis, MO 63108



Mission: to provide positive alternatives to abortion by offering free and confidential professional counseling and practical assistance to women facing untimely pregnancy.

Services: Pregnancy testing, group and individual counseling

Ideology: Pro-life

Contacts: 314-962-5300

Address: 2525 S. Brentwood Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63144

Mission: To provide high quality family planning services for teens and women.

Ideology: Pro-choice

Services: birth control counseling and methods, IUDs and implants, annual well women testing, STD testing and treatment, emergency contraception, pregnancy testing and health insurance counseling.

Contacts: 314-747-0800

Address: 4533 Clayton Ave., St. Louis, MO 63110



<Teen Pregnancy and Prevention Partnership>

Mission: Promotes adolescent sexual health and teen pregnancy prevention by uniting Missouri through advocacy, collaboration, training and public awareness.

Services: training and resources for parents, teens, students and professionals

Ideology: Pro-choice

Contacts: 314-884-8ASK

Address: 2433 N. Grand, St. Louis, MO 63106

<Metro Trans Umbrella Group>

Mission: By Trans for Trans – Bringing together the community of trans, genderqueer, androgynous, intersex & our allies in the St. Louis metro area through community, visibility, advocacy and education.

Services: Resource guide for counseling, support groups, helplines and medical needs, as well as a slew of inclusive resources for daily services.

Ideology: Not applicable

Contacts: info@stlmetrotrans.com

Address: 438 N Skinker Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63130



Shedding Light on the Decline of Organized Labor



Trevor Rogan
Senior
Political Science
& Economics

In the shadows of the past 50 years, the American labor movement has lost most of its political influence. Pundits on the political right and left disagree on whether this shifting power dynamic marks a positive or negative change for American society, but the decline in unions across the country certainly points to further transformation in the American workplace and the relationship between employers and employees.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), American union membership has fallen from over 30 percent of wage and salary workers to less than 12 percent since 1950. Gallup polls find that around 18 percent of all adults in the early 1950s belonged to a labor union, while in 2014 only about 10 percent of adults did. Starting in 1973, Gallup also collected data on public confidence in American institutions, with organized labor as one kind of institution. From 1973 to 1981, 33.8 percent of respondents on average said that they had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in organized labor, but from 2007 to 2016, only 20.9 percent of respondents on average claimed such confidence in unions.

The decade between 2007 and 2017 marked major economic upheaval and political fluctuations. In 2007, the financial crisis and the recession that followed imbued distrust in institutions, including those associated with organized labor. The Center for American Progress suggests in a 2010 article that public support for unions would rise when the economy improved, and this assertion appears to hold weight; the same Gallup poll found that 28 percent of respondents had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in unions in 2017, a 5 percent increase from the prior year and a 9 percent increase from the lows in 2007 and 2009.

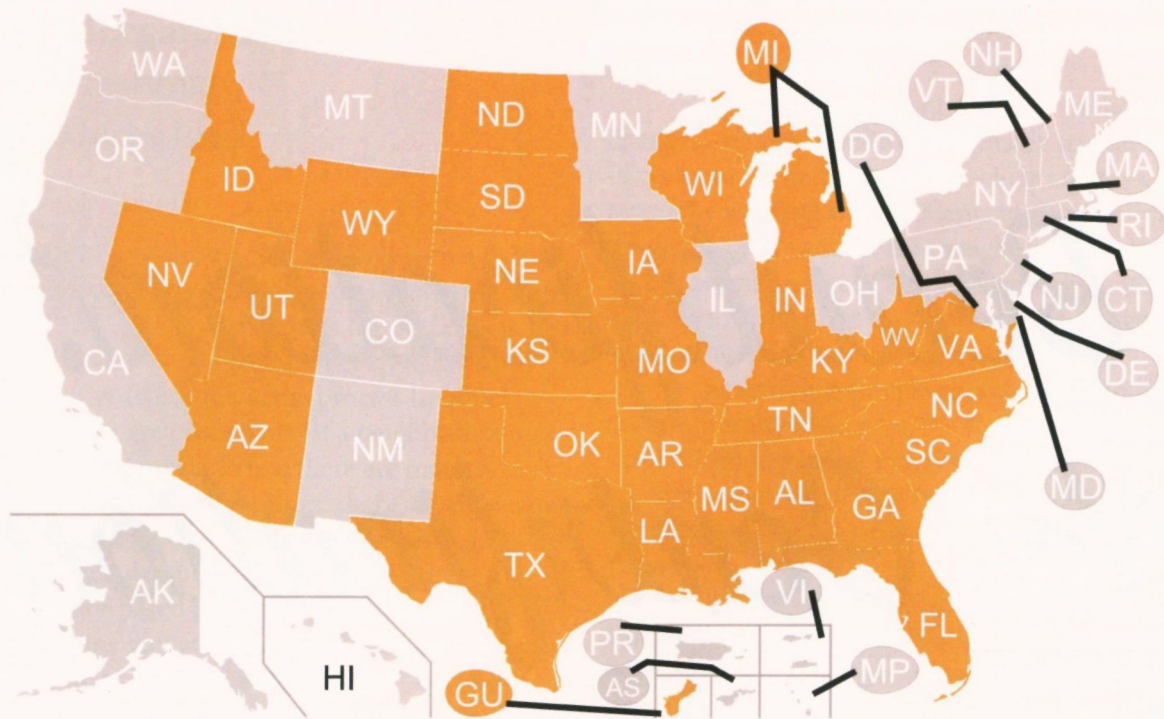
However, the public distrust likely landed a lasting blow to organized labor.

In 2010, a wave of electoral victories gave Republicans total control of government in several historically

unionized states, including Michigan and Wisconsin. In the next seven years, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, West Virginia and Kentucky adopted so-called “right-to-work” laws and other restrictions on union organization and worker mobilization. Missouri also signed right-to-work legislation in 2017, but it is inactive pending a 2018 statewide vote.

Organized labor is generally opposed to right-to-work laws, in part because they diminish union power and also due to their arguably misleading and politically-charged title. A pro-right-to-work advocacy group called the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation describes right-to-work laws as legislation that “guarantees that no person can be compelled, as a condition of employment, to join or not to join, nor to pay dues to a labor union.” However, this description implies that without right-to-work laws, a union can bar a job candidate from employment if they refuse to join the union, which is illegal. Former economics professor Charles Baird, a right-to-work proponent, writes in a 1998 article that “the only thing a union can require of the workers it represents is the payment of union dues and initiation fees,” not union membership. Baird goes on to describe the 1988 case *Communications Workers of America v. Beck*, where the Supreme Court said that “a worker could be compelled to pay only that portion of union dues and initiation fees used for collective bargaining, contract administration, and grievance procedures. No worker can be compelled to pay dues for such things as politics, lobbying, and union organizing.”

Baird uses this information to argue that unions trick workers into becoming members, but his article also demonstrates that right-to-work advocates misrepresent the rights workers already have. In reality, Congress ensured the right to work when it passed the Labor Management Relations Act of 1947. More commonly known as the Taft-Hartley Act, this legislation banned closed shops, or workplaces where union contracts forced employers to hire only union members. Although unions may not force workers to join



“A map of the United States highlighting states with right-to-work legislation.”

source: commons.wikimedia.org

their unions, the Taft-Hartley Act still forces employees at unionized firms to pay “agency fees,” or in some cases, “fair share fees.” However, the law also requires that unions represent non-union workers in labor disputes and provide to them the benefits of collective bargaining. Rick Ungar, a *Forbes* contributor, explains that “if a non-member employee is fired for a reason that the employee believes to constitute a wrongful termination, the union is obligated to represent the rights of that employee in the identical fashion as it would represent a union member improperly terminated.” Therefore, agency fees ensure that non-union workers compensate the union for its collective bargaining services and legal representation. When states pass right-to-work laws, they do not provide workers the freedom to work at a business without joining the union; right-to-work laws allow workers to earn a “free ride,” receiving benefits without paying any costs.

The National Right to Work Committee claims that these workers are not free riders but instead “captive passengers” who do not want the benefits they receive, and while this distinction is important, organized labor faces a larger issue. In the *Janus v. AFSCME* Supreme Court case, Mark Janus, an Illinois state employee, claims that forced payments to AFSCME Council 31, which represents State of Illinois workers, infringes on his right to free speech because unions are political entities. Regardless of this argument’s legitimacy, the Court is expected to favor Janus, leading to the end of forced fair share fees and essentially nationwide right-to-work status for public sector unions.

To a worker at a nonunionized company, these developments may sound insubstantial, but collective bargaining for higher wages appears to also have an impact on workplaces that lack a union. Scholars from the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), a left-leaning think tank in Washington, D.C., argue that “unions, especially in industries and regions where they are strong, help boost the wages of all workers by establishing pay and benefit standards that many nonunion firms adopt.” If restrictions on collective bargaining and union organization continue to take hold, working people in all workplaces may suffer. EPI also finds

that, “on average, [right-to-work] laws are associated with wages that are 3.2 percent lower than in states without such laws.” The rise in income inequality also points to the decline of organized labor. At the same time that union membership declined, income inequality grew tremendously. U.S. Census Bureau data portrays a near 10 percent drop in the middle class’ share of national income from 1968 to 2012.

For union members and advocates, the Janus case and the spread of right-to-work laws paints a demoralizing picture for the labor movement. Changes in campaign finance law allow candidates for political office to tap an abundant supply of funding from wealthy individuals whose motivations often contradict those of organized labor and working people. With less funding from nonunion workers, unions will have reduced political influence, which could lead to a downward spiral in political power as legislatures increasingly adopt laws that restrict collective bargaining.

However, recent events in West Virginia imply that organized labor may continue to forge ahead. From late February to early March, teachers across West Virginia went on strike to bargain for a 5 percent pay raise. Faced with increasing health-care costs along with inflation, they argued that the governor's proposed annual 1 percent increase would put their earnings on a downward trajectory. Though West Virginia was once a bastion for organized labor, striking in the state is illegal. Despite this, teachers managed to bargain for a 5 percent pay raise. The teacher-led workers' movement is taking hold in other states, including Oklahoma, the 49th-lowest-paying state for teachers in the country, where teachers have warned legislators that they may strike in April if salaries do not increase.

The American labor movement gained the most ground around a century ago when the lives of workers were most desperate and when inequality grew to levels that mirror today's wealth disparity. Perhaps workers will reach a point when they realize that enough is enough and the tides will change.

Beautification, Not Gentrification



photo by Jim Diaz



Morgan Kelly
Freshman
Undecided

In the past few decades, St. Louis has seen a decline in population and an increase in vacant buildings. Much of the news about neighborhood change in the St. Louis metro area is centered around neighborhood decay, followed by gentrification. Gentrification is the process by which low-income residents are pushed out of a neighborhood as it is renovated and improved. While there are many areas in St. Louis experiencing gentrification, there are also many community-based programs making positive changes to the infrastructure and landscape of neighborhoods in St. Louis.

Community-based programs work to improve neighborhoods in the city with the help of current community members. One of these programs, the not-for-profit Brightside St. Louis, was founded in 1982 and works along with residents in many St. Louis neighborhoods.

"Brightside's mission is to improve the quality of life in our community by educating, engaging and inspiring St.

Louisians to make our region cleaner, greener and more environmentally sustainable," Mary Lou Green, Executive Director at Brightside, said.

The community-based aspect of Brightside is important so as to avoid gentrifica-

tion. Involving community members works to ensure that Brightside's efforts are helping and not displacing current residents. Oftentimes, beautification projects are followed by gentrification because they cause drastic changes to the neighborhoods, which can lead to rapid increases in property prices in the area. Residents can be displaced when the cost of living in the area exceeds their means.

"Beautification is often a precursor for gentrification. It commodifies the price of the land. The end result of high-scale community gardens is gentrification because they are fundamentally changing the neighborhood landscaping," J.S. Onésimo (Ness) Sandoval, Associate Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Saint Louis University, said.

Brightside St. Louis recognizes the risk of gentrification through beautification, and works to involve the community by engaging residents in the different programs they sponsor, including graffiti eradication and neighborhood clean-ups. Brightside also provides resources and information to community members to get them involved.

"Brightside works with residents to improve the neighborhood that they live in. We are not making neigh-

borhoods better to push current residents out; we are working with current residents to make the areas better for everyone," Green said.

By involving current residents in the neighborhood changes, organizations like Brightside strengthen the sense of community in the areas. They help create public green spaces by working with residents to plant flowers, native perennials, shrubs and trees in neighborhoods that lack them. Living in a clean, green space has proven to improve mental health and strengthen immune systems, which in turn leads to safer and healthier communities.

Beautifying neighborhoods can help to improve the community in an area, but the small changes to make a neighborhood greener can positively impact residents' lives. The opportunity to live in an area surrounded by nature and with strong infrastructure is something every individual deserves.

"Everybody has a right to live a dignified life, and part of living a dignified life is living in an area that is not only safe, but is rich in resources," Sandoval said.

While things like the ability to have wifi or living near a park may not seem like luxuries, these are resources that are not available to individuals living in certain neighborhoods.

"Everybody has a right to live a dignified life, and part of living a dignified life is living in an area that is not only safe, but is rich in resources."

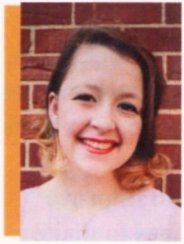
Beautification projects can go beyond cosmetic changes to a neighborhood and work to improve its infrastructure. Brightside's focus on environmentalism ensures that the resources they provide for infrastructure change are also centered around creating more environmentally-friendly spaces. For example, they implement recycling education programs and provide recycling bins for residents, making it simpler for residents to recycle.

"It's great to see how a small investment of time and energy from a few folks can create an exponential, positive effect on an entire neighborhood," Green said.

The small cosmetic and infrastructural changes that result from beautification projects facilitate positive changes in neighborhoods. With efforts like those made by Brightside St. Louis, residents will start to see changes in their living spaces without fear of gentrification. Brightside's goal is to beautify and improve neighborhoods while strengthening the current community and ensuring that the residents will be able to reap the benefits of their work with Brightside.

While there are still vacant buildings, neighborhoods that lack resources and many areas that are being gentrified in St. Louis, community-based neighborhood beautification programs like Brightside St. Louis are making great improvements to neighborhoods, while simultaneously making the city more environmentally friendly.

#HASHTAG



Beatrice
Freshman
Political Science

Twitter has become a vast, compact resource for everything that's happening. We use it for our Kanye updates, our Kim K updates, our Kylie Jenner updates and, increasingly, our news. But, relying on a sole website—a corporation, really—to tell us what we should care about is a dangerous habit.

Twitter functions on a trending-based presentation of news, effectively marginalizing stories that do not receive the attention they need and deserve. Our busy, bustling

“We as a society evolve significantly when we can debate the implications of our news, not its validity.”

world has resulted in a desire for the fleeting gratification attached to popular “news,” and has seeded great reliance on trending to tell us what is important. The practice of ranking our news leads to inaccuracy and polarization in our media and causes significant destruction to our ability to engage in civil discourse and access news of any integrity.

In order for a subject to “trend” on Twitter, it must be among the most tweeted-about subjects. The number of tweets does not actually matter, though; it's the rate at which those tweets are being published that enables it to appear as “trending”. Unfortunately, just because more people are talking about a topic does not necessarily mean it is substantial or relevant.

Twitter ranks stories based on popularity, not necessarily cultural importance. Think of the Westminster Dog Show: a dog receives more widespread visibility when a group of people talk enough about it and assert its prominence, even though most people would agree that all the dogs are precious and deserving of ten thousand hugs. The more people are talking about one dog, the more people will talk about it.

This is how Twitter functions: presenting attention as a scarce resource. It forces us to rank news instead of encouraging holistic consumption of content with personal relevance or cultural significance. The importance

of current events can only be calculated by the number of hashtags.

Take February 4th, 2018, the day of Super Bowl LII. Top trending topics in the US included the game, Justin Timberlake, Prince, Kylie Jenner, Stormi, Donald Trump, the FBI, Tom Brady, Amtrak, Paul Manafort, China, Cold War, Uma Thurman, Harvey Weinstein, Syria, Moscow, Paul Ryan and minimum wage. The incessant dance of names and events across the trending line on Twitter proves one thing: not everything gets the attention it deserves. We prefer to live in the excitement of the future instead of dwelling on the predictability of the present; we crave the mystery of the unknown as opposed to the misery of last week.

Twitter uniquely offers us this fleeting gratification and gives any single person the ability to present their 280-character ideas on the same exact platform as the President of the United States, the Pope and Chrissy Teigen. It seems like an excellent venue for a democracy, where everyone gets an equal voice to express themselves. The metaphor is perfect, even to the point of marginalization.

The phenomenon of being satiated by the minimal, online agency of liking or retweeting an inaccurate but emotionally powerful source is a dangerous effect of using Twitter as a news source. The conversion of a retweet to topical expertise is inappropriate, as genuine integrity is willingly and explicitly compromised for the sake of ease. Our competitive news environment—one of privilege and power—efficiently works to marginalize even the most prominent stories.

Being pushed “into the shadows” is a perplexing and often vague concept: what do we know about what we don't know in the known world of the unknown? There are three primary, unintended and consequential effects of competitive news: it shadows stories, it internally marginalizes participants and it perpetuates the power social storytellers have over cultural narratives.

Twitter is modeled to reward the most popular topics with more visibility which, logically, can shadow other stories. #MeToo is an exceptionally beneficial online movement that gives victims a tool to speak and others a glimpse into the realities of experiencing sexual harassment, but it wasn't always as prominent as today. Tarana Burke started the hashtag in 2006—more than a decade before allegations against Harvey Weinstein rocketed it to the top of the trending bar. This movement is one of many that must contend with other, equally as important content everyday to gain—and maintain—visibility. When one trend rises, its prevalence draws attention away from others: yet one topic's necessary popularity should not diminish the attention we

give to another. Even so, inside the #MeToo movement, things are not perfect.

“[Twitter is] exceptional at creating visibility, but we just need to monitor if that visibility is being given to accurate sources.”

When allegations broke out against Harvey Weinstein, his name was regularly atop the trending list. Rarely did any of his accusers, including Uma Thurman, Salma Hayek, Lupita Nyong'o and Ashley Judd, appear on the trending page. These women became part of his story, and the complexity of their situation was reduced to a buzzword. If we look at #MeToo as a story about Harvey Weinstein, we forget not only the celebrities he has assaulted, but the millions of women that also face sexual assault and do not have the social capital to fight back. When stories are hallmarked by a single person or word, their messages become perverted and our interpretations of what is important is flawed.

But, Twitter can also be the epicenter of valuable and effective social change—whether through positive or negative origins. In the now-infamous Babenett article, Aziz Ansari's questionable exchanges with an unnamed woman sparked great controversy between what is and is not sexual assault. Some claimed the actor should be treated with the swift justice Kevin Spacey and Matt Lauer saw. Others, in a New York Times op-ed, felt Ansari was “guilty, of not being a mind reader”. There was so much conflict because we as a society have not decided on what words mean and what the truth is.

The visibility of the Ansari story on Twitter enabled people to begin discussing the difference between “assault” and “misconduct”; “accident” and “intent”. If we let our stories about intercourse span beyond sexual assault allegations, then we can actually have a sex-positive society. We can prevent the Harvey Weinstein's of the world and honor the Uma's, Salma's, Lupita's, and Ashley's if we choose to tell their stories, not oogle over his.

We as a society evolve significantly when we can debate the implications of our news, not its validity. However, Twitter still has some barriers, besides trending, that make it difficult to access accurate news that is reported earnestly. Polarization of our news is a primary effect of Twitter: if we can't agree on what stories need to be told, which versions are correct, how much significance they hold and even what actually happened, then our news creeps farther and farther away from the truth and—equally as important—the center.

Polarization of news is a major problem not only because it distorts facts, but because it inaccurately asserts that factual events can have an ideological bias. They cannot. Polarizing and weaponizing news can marginalize both the content of stories and the messages they carry and,

on Twitter, there are voices that rise from the confusion to take hold of cultural narratives. Three major parties can be blamed for marginalization through perpetuating the power of social storytellers: corporations, trolls and ourselves.

Corporations use Twitter as a space to both overtly advertise and establish relationships with customers. Companies spend billions of dollars a year on sponsored trending and camouflaged ads in order to reach their target demographics. This monetization of social media, however, becomes increasingly problematic when brands blindly or brazenly intersect with social movements. Infamously, DiGiorno's Pizza hijacked the #WhyIStayed conversation, which gave survivors of domestic abuse an opportunity to explain the difficult decisions they had faced. The company tweeted, “#WhyIStayed because you had pizza,” gaining explosive backlash.

Corporations on Twitter can either blemish social conversations or attempt to dictate what users see and believe. While corporations operate on social media for financial gain, their presence is dwarfed by the nefarious intentions of trolls.

“Troll” can be loosely defined to mean an aggressive online user. Trolls can range from an angry Tasty commenter to a hacker breaching Equifax's data to @ThetaClair, a “Southern sister with the spirit of 1776” Twitter user that sparked collegiate controversy.

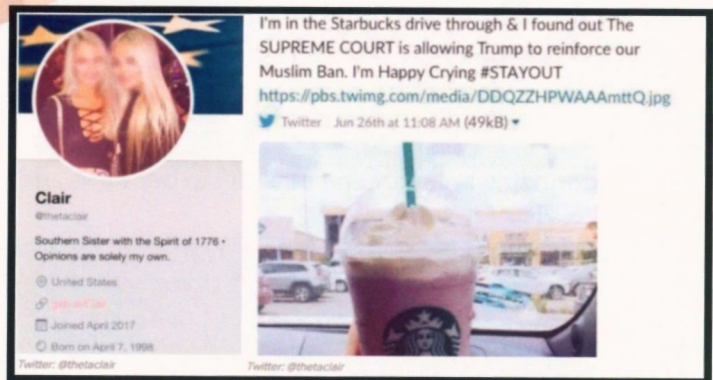


photo credit: BuzzFeed

@ThetaClair had a profile that embodied your “stereotypical” sorority girl: flashy photos, friendly faces and a fun-filled life. However, each Starbucks photo was capped with an Islamophobic jab; each boyf candid included a deeply disturbing assertion regarding gender stereotypes.

Upon discovering the account's inexplicable origins and use of stolen photos, “Buzzfeed” found that @ThetaClair was “one of a handful of seemingly phony Twitter accounts that use images and stereotypes of white women to promote pro-Trump, anti-feminist, white nationalist, white supremacist, and/or neo-Nazi rhetoric.” This was not satire nor social commentary; this was a consciously constructed deception that sought to divide people online through bigotry.

But, the account was not alone. A massive portion of Robert Mueller's investigation of the Trump Administration's "potential" collusion with Russia is based on the fact that known Russian trolls developed fake accounts, events, organizations and movements, with the sole purpose of starting conflict and violence between opposing factions in America. According to the New York Times, counter-

“When stories are hall-
marked by a single person or
word, their messages become
perverted and our interpre-
tations of what is important
is flawed.”

feit black power accounts, such as Blacktivist, and unreal white-supremacist ones, like Heart of Texas, held more followers than their real-life counterparts. The Russian-puppeted pages made vastly fraudulent claims, such as promoting fake rallies against police brutality and encouraging Texas' secession from the United States. These trolls wanted to stir up racial tension and incite violence in America, and our attraction to competitive news made it possible.

When it comes down to it, we are to blame for how we act. We consume news and we consciously choose whether or not to verify its validity. We must take responsibility by prioritizing accuracy and integrity in our news and how we access it.

Accuracy matters. Yet in a world dominated by trending, it can sometimes be difficult to achieve. What can we do to maintain truth and integrity in our news, and not allow the competition of Twitter to exclusively write our cultural narratives? Well, it will take logging off, signing up and shelling out.

We can refocus our news consumption with logging off Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Snapchat, or anywhere else we get our glitzy, second-hand "journalism". Use Twitter to participate in and learn about social conversations, but stick to the basics, The Washington Post, The New York Times, NPR, CBS and the BBC, for your news. These articles are published by paid journalists and respected institutions, not clickbait offering the quickest ways to lose 30 pounds in 30 days.

If you still need to get your ranking fix, theweek.com/10things provides a comprehensive yet compact list of the top 10 things you need to know before starting your day. Staying away from polarized and competitive websites can help refine your palate for news.

Take initiative and choose to be informed. Sign up for news sources and news commentary alike. Consciously observing the way in which topics are approached on Fox

News versus in BuzzFeed can illustrate the minute ways in which polarization moulds every aspect of nearly all stories. Promoting a diverse consumption of news and news commentary enables tolerance and respect on readers' behalves. Use polarized sources to understand marginalization, not to practice it.



About a dozen people protested against what they called the threat of radical Islam in Houston in May 2016. They were met by a much larger crowd of counterprotesters. Both sides were organized by Russian groups.

Photo Credit: NYT

Finally, we can refigure our news consumption by shelling out. The transition to primarily online media means that stories are easier to share, websites are easier to fake and journalists are forced to invent sexier titles in order to compete for any acclaim—even for their most essential work.

If we want a strong, healthy institution for news, we the people must fund it.

“Representation—how communities, problems, places, and histories get narrated and depicted—matters... it's important to think about whose stories get heard and whose don't, or whose definitions of a particular situation tend to prevail and whose don't,” Dr. Benjamin Looker, Associate Professor of American Studies at Saint Louis University, said. Dr. Looker is well-versed in the socio-political impact of people marginalized by urban and suburbanization. He outlines representation of all stories and their truth as an opportunity for agency, and “that's why it's crucial for people interested in [social justice] to think seriously about imagery, representation, and storytelling.”

Twitter is a valuable platform that, if used correctly, can be a force for good; it's exceptional at creating visibility, but we just need to monitor if that visibility is being given to accurate sources. #BlackLivesMatter is a case where Twitter has undeniably enabled dynamic and powerful social conversations, through its ability to easily and widely spread videos of police brutality and protests. This is an earnest use of Twitter that accurately showcases and complements national discourse. When stories are presented like this—enhanced by Twitter, and not dictated by it—then we are capable of having important conversations without bias or divisive jargon, ideologies or connotations. By heeding this ideology that our involvement inclines us to seize the ways in which our stories are told, we can make integrity the new trend.



OUR MISSION

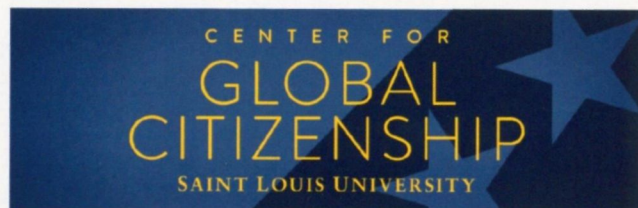
We are already one, but imagine that we are not. OneWorld exists to rediscover that, while we are many in our cultures, religions and struggles, we are one in our common humanity. We yearn to remove the barriers of ignorance and injustice because the most basic and unchanging truth that unites us is the infinite value of the human person. OneWorld emphasizes this unity by raising awareness of social injustice, inspiring action and transforming our hearts, minds and society.

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